

HISTORY OF THE BRANCH

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the First World War (1914 – 18) a number of Squadrons and Unit Associations were formed to allow those who had served together to maintain contact with each other. It was not, however, until 1930 that an organisation known as the Comrades of the Royal Air Force was formed with membership open, irrespective of rank, to those serving, or who had served, in the Royal Air Force, Royal Flying Corps, Royal Naval Air Service and Dominion Air Forces. The Father of the Royal Air Force, Marshall of the Royal Air Force Lord Trenchard, was the first President. Now this Branch has the honour of his Grandson being our Hon. President.

The women who had served with the R.A.F. in the First World War had, in 1919, formed an Old Comrades Association to which members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force were admitted. Both organisations had worked in close co-operation and after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 agreed to amalgamate.

In 1943, the name of the organisation was changed to The Royal Air Forces Association with membership open to all who were serving or had served in the Royal Air Force of the crown.

No. 623 LETCHWORTH, HITCHIN and DISTRICT BRANCH

In the early 1930's a Henlow and Hitchin Branch of the Comrades of the R.A.F. was formed with R.A.F. Henlow providing the inspiration.

This Branch carried the work of the Association locally throughout World War II. Two new local Branches emerged in 1946 – Letchworth and Baldock.

The immediate post war enthusiasm waned however. Baldock was disbanded and, sadly, so was the Henlow and Hitchin Branch.

In 1962 Letchworth was re-designated Letchworth, Hitchin and District Branch and since then it has become the best known branch in Hertfordshire.

In 2021 a further North Hertfordshire Branch closed, Stevenage, with its membership being transferred in this Branch.

Happily, despite all the changes, the strong bonds with R.A.F. Henlow continued, until its pending closure in 2020.

Although R.A.F. Henlow had its stay of closure extended, the number of serving members have been greatly reduced, and therefore unfortunately so as our connection with the camp.

Over the past few months we have learnt that the camp's life has been extended to 2026, and with that good news the bonds that we had in the past are now being regenerated.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION

We exist to help those less fortunate than ourselves, Extracts from our Royal Charter describe our objectives thus:-

- To promote the welfare, by charitable means, of those who are serving or have served in our Air Forces, their wives and dependants and the widows and dependants of those who died whilst serving or thereafter.
- To preserve the memory and honour the example set by comrades or members of the Association who have died in our service.

ORGANISATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Association is governed by its Annual Conference where principles and policies are formulated. The business of the Association is carried out by the Central Council and discharged through the network of nine areas in the UK which are further divided into Regions, Letchworth, Hitchin and District Branch

is part of the South Eastern Area. The Area H.Q. is in Leicester.

The Branch Committee is elected each year at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee meets regularly to spearhead the work of the Branch and to ensure that there is a social programme within which our objectives can meet in a happy manner.

We have adopted two local ATC Squadrons, No. 248 (Letchworth) and No. 1066 (Hitchin) who work closely with us in our fund raising activities.

R.A.F.A. NEWS

The Association sends a first class quarterly journal *Air Mail* to each full and life member, and the Associate members who request it, to keep us in touch with major events affecting our work. It also tells us about R.A.F. matters and reminds us of service life in the past.

Our Branch produces a regular newsletter, **RAFAGEN** which is sent to requesting members by email, informing them of our programme of events, with news and stories of our members. This newsletter was voted the best in the South & Eastern Area of the Association in 2018.

BRANCH MEETINGS

Our Branch meets on the last Wednesday of each month at the Letchworth Par 3 Golf Family Centre, William Way, Letchworth Garden City. SG6 3JH

These monthly meeting known to us as **NAAFI BREAK** and is in the form of a coffee morning, for members and anyone who are part of the Royal Air Force family, and their dependants, who come for a coffee, chat, and meet friends.

There is ample parking and has disabled facilities. We are grateful to the management of the Letchworth Par 3 Golf Family Centre for their generosity and co-operation in helping us to achieve our objectives.

The Committee meet on the first Wednesday of every alternate month at the Par 3 Family Golf Centre.